The Sophie Kerr Legacy

Sophie Kerr, a prolific and popular American writer of the early 20th century, has left an indelible literary mark on Washington College. The gift that Kerr bequeathed more than 40 years ago has enabled the College to bring to campus a succession of the nation’s top writers, editors, and scholars. Edward Albee, Joseph Brodsky, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton, Eamon Grennan, Toni Morrison, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Pinsky, Charles Simic, Mary Karr, Jonathan Franzen, Jane Smiley, Junot Diaz, Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket), Colum McCann, Lauren Groff, Natasha Trethewey, Jacqueline Woodson, and Ted Kooser are just a few of the literary heavyweights who have inspired and instructed the next generation of American writers at Washington College.

In addition to the Sophie Kerr Speaker Series, the Sophie Kerr Gift provides scholarships for students who show literary promise, pays for library books, and supports various student literary activities. The result is a vibrant intellectual culture where the literary arts thrive.

The Kerr endowment also funds the Sophie Kerr Prize, awarded each year to the graduating senior who demonstrates the best ability and promise for future fulfillment in the field of literary endeavor. To be valued at $65,770 in 2016, it is the nation’s largest literary prize awarded solely to undergraduate students.

The Rose O’Neill Literary House

The Creative Writing culture so much in evidence at the Rose O’Neill Literary House is grounded in Washington College’s historic commitment to foster writing across all disciplines and to connect our students and faculty to the wider culture of literature and the creative arts. In collaboration with the English Department and the Sophie Kerr Committee, the Lit House hosts literary seasons of programming built around themes such as “Chicano/a & Latino/a Voices,” “Writing for (and about) Young Adults,” “Poets Writing the Lyrical Essay,” and “What’s Found in Translation.”

Fiction writers, poets, essayists, playwrights, critics, editors, singer-songwriters, and studio artists routinely join us from around the world for readings, craft talks, and residencies. Recent guests include Joy Castro, Eduardo C. Corral, Emily Danforth, Dick Davis, Mark Doty, Tarfia Faizullah, Neil Gaiman, Jamaal May, Ander Monson, Maggie Nelson, Benjamin Paloff, and Anthony Swofford.
Literary House Orientation Open House and Print Shop Demo

Friday, August 28, 8:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

The Lit House welcomes the Class of 2019. Learn about the campus publications as well as art, music, and writing groups, try your hand at letterpress printing, and connect early with like-minded upper-class students and arts faculty.

Print Shop Workshops

Our free, non-credit Print Shop workshops are open to students, faculty, and staff at Washington College, and our Chestertown neighbors. Come learn the history of the book and experience letterpress printing and bookbinding. Master Printer T. Michael Kaylor instructs. The course lasts 7 weeks. To sign up, email lit_house@washcoll.edu.

Beginner’s Workshop: Introduction to Letterpress
Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Begins Tuesday, September 15. Print Shop, Rose O’Neill Literary House

Advanced Workshop: Book Arts
Thursdays 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Begins Thursday, September 17. Print Shop, Rose O’Neill Literary House

Sophie Kerr Lecture Series

First-Year Book Event with Claudia Rankine
Thursday, September 10 at 4:30 p.m., Decker Theatre, Gibson Center for the Arts

Claudia Rankine is the author of *Citizen: An American Lyric; Don’t Let Me Be Lonely; Plot; The End of the Alphabet; and Nothing in Nature is Private*. She won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry—for *Citizen*, the first book ever to be named a finalist in both the poetry and criticism categories. In 2014 she was a National Book Award Finalist, and received *Poets & Writers*’ Jackson Poetry Prize. *Citizen* also holds the distinction of being the only poetry book to be a *New York Times* bestseller in the nonfiction category. Rankine co-edited the anthologies *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind* and *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, and her work appears in several anthologies, including *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present, Best American Poetry 2001, Giant Step: African American Writing at the Crossroads of the Century*, and *The Garden Thrives: Twentieth Century African-American Poetry. This event is sponsored by the Dean’s Office, Sophie Kerr Committee, and Black Studies program.*
Sophie Kerr Lecture Series

"Do You See This?" The Politics of Attention in Shakespearean Tragedy with Steven Mullaney

Monday, September 21 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O'Neill Literary House

Steven Mullaney is a Professor of English at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is the author of The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England (Chicago, 1988; University of Michigan Press, 1994) and The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare (Chicago, June 2015). He is currently immersed in the ecologies of conversion, space, and theater as a participant in a five-year, multi-disciplinary project called “Early Modern Conversions: Religions, Cultures, Ecologies,” which is centered at McGill University in Montreal. His next long project or book is tentatively titled, The Geography of Things Unseen.

Sophie Kerr Lecture Series

A Reading by Linda Gregerson

Tuesday, September 22 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O'Neill Literary House

Linda Gregerson is the author of seven collections of poetry, including New and Selected Poems (2015); The Selvage (2012); The Woman Who Died in Her Sleep, which was a finalist for the Lenore Marshall Prize and The Poets Prize; Magnetic North, which was a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award; and Waterborne, which won the 2003 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. Gregerson’s poems have appeared in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, Poetry, Granta, The Paris Review, The Kenyon Review, Best American Poetry, and many other journals and anthologies.

Literary House Series

The Verbal & the Visual — An Evening of Typography with Cyrus Highsmith

Tuesday, September 29 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O'Neill Literary House

Cyrus Highsmith joined the Font Bureau in 1997. As Senior Designer, he concentrates on the development of new typefaces. A faculty member at Rhode Island School of Design department of graphic design since 2000, he teaches letter drawing. He also leads workshops and is a frequent lecturer across the United States, Mexico, Japan, and Europe. In addition to being a type designer, Highsmith is an illustrator and author. In 2012, Font Bureau published his first book, Inside Paragraphs: Typographic Fundamentals, about which Matthew Carter wrote “There is nothing you need to understand about using type that’s not in this book.” See drawings, prints, and sketches by Highsmith on the Cyrumblr or follow him on Twitter.
Sophie Kerr Lecture Series

A Reading by Peter Turchi

*Thursday, October 1 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Peter Turchi is the author of five books of fiction and nonfiction, including *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* and, most recently, *A Muse and A Maze: Writing as Puzzle, Mystery, and Magic*. He has also co-edited three anthologies for writers, including *Bringing the Devil to His Knees: The Craft of Fiction and the Writing Life* and *The Story Behind the Story: 16 Stories by Contemporary Writers and How They Work*. He wrote the first draft of his novel *The Girls Next Door* the summer before his senior year at Washington College, where he earned his BA and received the Sophie Kerr Prize in 1982. The recipient of fellowships from the NEA and the Guggenheim Foundation, he has served as director of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College and the creative writing program at Arizona State University. He currently teaches at the University of Houston.

Literary House Series

*Worth Our Breath — A Literary House Press Book Launch*

*Tuesday, October 6 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Join us for a fiction reading and book signing as the Literary House Press releases a special, limited-edition letterpress chapbook, *Worth Our Breath*, by James Magruder, including original illustrations by local artist Stuart Cawley. A Baltimore-based fiction writer, playwright, and translator, Magruder’s adaptations of works by Marivaux, Molière, Gozzi, Hofmannsthal, Lesage, and Dickens have been produced on and off-Broadway, across the country, and in Germany and Japan. His debut novel, *Sugarless*, was a Lambda Award finalist and shortlisted for the 2010 William Saroyan International Writing Prize. His linked story collection, *Let Me See It*, was published by TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press in June 2014. He teaches dramaturgy at Swarthmore College.

Sophie Kerr & Literary House Series

A Reading by Roy Kesey

*Monday, October 12 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Roy Kesey is the author, most recently, of the short story collection *Any Deadly Thing* (Dzanc Books, 2013) and the novel *Pacazo* (Dzanc Books, 2011/Jonathan Cape, 2012). His other books include the short story collection *All Over*, the novella *Nothing in the World*, and a historical guidebook to the city of Nanjing. He has received a National Endowment for the Arts creative writing fellowship, the Paula Anderson Book Award, and the Bullfight Media Little Book Award.
His short stories, essays, translations, and poems have appeared in more than a hundred magazines and anthologies, including Best American Short Stories and New Sudden Fiction. Kesey earned his bachelor’s degree in English from Washington College in 1991. In the fall of 2015, he will serve as the first Sophie Kerr/ Rose O’Neill Literary House Writer in Residence and will teach a creative writing workshop, "Non/fiction" in the English department.

Sophie Kerr & Literary House Series

The Bullies of Wall Street: A Reading by Sheila Bair, President of Washington College
Monday, October 19 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Sheila C. Bair became president of Washington College on August 1, 2015, following a distinguished career in public service, most notably as Chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation during the turbulent years 2006-2011. With the collapse of U.S. and global markets as well as venerable financial institutions, she worked to bolster public confidence and financial stability and advocated for policies to end the doctrine of too-big-to-fail banks and taxpayer bailouts. In addition to two children’s books and the young adult book The Bullies of Wall Street, she wrote Bull by the Horns (2012), a chronicle of her time at the FDIC. Seating is limited: first come, first served.

Literary House Series

The Verbal & the Visual — An Evening of Book Design with Jeff Clark
Tuesday, October 20 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Jeff Clark is the author of The Little Door Slides Back, Ruins, and Music and Suicide (winner of the James Laughlin Award), among other works, and has made his living as a book designer for twenty years. His studio, Quemadura, is based in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where he is also active in community organizing and public artmaking. He and Robert Bonnono translated A Roll of the Dice by Stéphane Mallarmé (Wave Books, 2015).

Literary House Series

The Verbal & the Visual — An Evening of Poetry & Art with Matthea Harvey
Tuesday, November 3 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Matthea Harvey is the author of five books of poetry — If the Tabloids are True What Are You?, Of Lamb (an illustrated erasure with images by Amy Jean Porter), Modern Life (a finalist for the National Book Critics
Circle Award and a *New York Times* Notable Book), *Sad Little Breathing Machine*, and *Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form*. She has also published two children’s books, *Cecil the Pet Glacier*, illustrated by Giselle Potter, and *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake*, illustrated by Elizabeth Zechel. She teaches poetry at Sarah Lawrence and lives in Brooklyn.

**Sophie Kerr & Literary House Series**

**Using Dreams in Narrative — A Craft Talk by Roy Kesey**

*Monday, November 9 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Despite a pedigree that reaches back through Coleridge and De Quincey all the way to Cervantes and Shakespeare, for the past half-century the prevailing consensus on the use of dreams in fiction has been: Please Don’t. But are they now poised for a comeback? Probably not. Which is not to say they don’t have their place. This talk will discuss common uses for dreams in both classical and modern literature, and will explore ways in which contemporary literature might make use of them as well. Practical exercises included. You have been warned.

**First-Year Reading**

*Tuesday, November 17, 7:00 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Come hear Washington College first-year writers read from their original work!
Literary House Series

Queer Voices — An Evening of Poetry with Saeed Jones

Tuesday, February 16 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Saeed Jones is the editor of BuzzFeed LGBT and a Pushcart Prizewinning poet. His debut poetry collection Prelude to Bruise was described by Publishers Weekly as “a dark night of the soul presented as the finest of evening gowns.” NPR says his work is both “beautiful and unsparing.”

His work has appeared in publications like Guernica, The Rumpus, Hayden’s Ferry Review, and Blackbird among others. Saeed is the recipient of fellowships from Cave Canem and Queer / Art / Mentors.

Literary House Series

Sex in YA: Authenticity, Agency, & How Far is Too Far with Christa Desir

Thursday, February 25 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Christa Desir writes contemporary fiction for young adults. Her novels include Fault Line and Bleed Like Me and the forthcoming Other Broken Things. She has volunteered as a rape victim activist for more than ten years, including providing direct service as an advocate in hospital ERs. She is a founding member of the Voices and Faces Project, a nonprofit organization for rape survivors that conducts an international survivor-based testimonial writing workshop. She also is an acquiring content editor for Samhain Publishing, a romance publisher based in Ohio.

Every year, the Literary House Summer Interns are provided with training and a modest budget to organize and run a professional literary event at the Rose O’Neill Literary House. This year’s event will be organized entirely by 2015 interns Ryan Manning ’17 and Aliya Merhi ’16.

Sophie Kerr Lecture Series

“Not-at-Home Movies: Queer Aesthetics and Amateur Movie-Making in the 1930s” with Christopher Castiglia & Christopher Reed

Monday, March 7, 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

This talk, focused on a collection of home movies in the Northeast Historic Film Archives in Bucksport, Maine, looks at the ways that camp aesthetics usually associated with gay men in big cities bring out the queer beauties of family life for a young man in the early 1930s.

Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed teach in the English Department of the Pennsylvania State University and are co-authors of If Memory Serves: AIDS, Gay Men, and
the Promise of the Queer Past (University of Minnesota Press, 2012). Reed is also the author of Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas (Oxford University Press, 2011) as well as books on the Bloomsbury Group and publications on Japanism. Castiglia is the author of Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst (University of Chicago Press, 1996) and other publications on American literature and culture.

**Literary House Series**

**Queer Voices — An Evening of Fiction with Rahul Mehta**

*Tuesday, March 22 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Rahul Mehta’s debut short story collection, Quarantine, was awarded a Lambda Literary Award and the Asian American Literary Award for Fiction. His short stories have appeared in the Kenyon Review, Epoch, The Sun, and New Stories from the South, and his essays have appeared on the Op-Ed page of the New York Times and in the New York Times Magazine, Elle India, and the International Herald Tribune. An Out magazine “Out 100” honoree, Mehta is currently finishing a novel, forthcoming from HarperCollins. He lives in Philadelphia and teaches creative writing at the University of the Arts.

**Sophie Kerr Lecture Series**

**Laurie Cannady**

*Thursday, March 24 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Dr. Cannady has published an array of articles and essays on poverty in America, community and domestic violence, and women’s issues. She has also spoken against sexual assault in the military at West Point. Her memoir, Crave: Sojourn of a Hungry Soul, will be published November 2015 with Etruscan Press. Dr. Cannady currently resides in Central Pennsylvania with her husband, Chico Cannady, and their three children. She teaches English at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania.

**Literary House Series**

**Queer Voices — An Evening of Creative Nonfiction with Daisy Hernández**

*Tuesday, April 5 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Nicky Beer is the author of *The Octopus Game* (Carnegie Mellon UP, 2015) and *The Diminishing House* (Carnegie Mellon UP, 2010), winner of the 2010 Colorado Book Award for Poetry. Her awards include a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Ruth Lilly Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation. She is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Denver, where she also co-edits the literary journal *Copper Nickel*.

"Stunned into a Poem by a Fact": A Craft Talk on Poetry & Research with Nicky Beer, 2016 Mary Wood Fellow

*Tuesday, April 12 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

 Though poetry is often considered, as William Wordsworth called it, “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” contemporary poetics have made a compelling case for the use of research in the poet’s work. This craft talk will address aesthetic, cultural, and political ramifications of incorporating scientific and historic research into poetry, and celebrate what Linda Bierds refers to as the phenomenon of being “stunned into writing a poem by a fact.”

A Poetry Reading with Nicky Beer, 2016 Mary Wood Fellow

*Wednesday, April 13 at 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Join us for an evening of poetry as Nicky Beer reads from her work! Reading to be followed by book sale and signing.

Senior Reading

*Tuesday, April 19 at 7:00 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House*

Come hear graduating senior writers read from their original pieces. The Literary House will also announce the winners of the Literary House Genre Fiction Prize, the William W. Warner Prize for Creative Writing on Nature and the Environment, and the Jude & Miriam Pfister Poetry Prize.
Sophie Kerr Prize Event

Week of May 16, Date and Location TBA

This event to announce the winner of the annual Sophie Kerr Prize features a keynote address by a noted author and readings by the student-finalists. Previous speakers have included National Book Award-winner Colum McCann, Pulitzer Prize-winner Michael Dirda, renowned poet Mary Jo Salter, and author and 1982 Sophie Kerr Prize Winner Peter Turchi. In 2016, the Prize will be valued at $65,770. This event is free and open to the public.

Literary House Series

Summer Poetry Salons

May 24, June 28, and July 26, 4:30 p.m., Rose O’Neill Literary House

Join us for an afternoon of poetry, local music, tasty food and drink, and good conversation about the literary life!

Cave Canem Residency

June 2016, Rose O’Neill Literary House

Cave Canem, the nation’s leading organization for African American poets, teams up with the Rose O’Neill Literary House and Washington College for the Washington College Cave Canem Residency in June 2016. Chosen through a rigorous application process, the Fellow will spend time researching and writing in Chestertown. Additionally, the Fellow will give a public reading as part of the Summer Poetry Salon series. Our 2015 Fellow was poet Kamilah Aisha Moon. Check our website, lithouse.washcoll.edu, for more details.

All events listed in this brochure are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.
Visit lithouse.washcoll.edu and english.washcoll.edu for updates, more info, and additional events.
“What we’re celebrating today is an extraordinary legacy, a commitment to literature and writing that might seem unfashionable to some, but that you and I know is something of which this college should be extraordinarily proud.”

Washington College alum and winner of the 1982 Sophie Kerr Prize Peter Turchi, in his keynote address for the announcement of the 2015 Sophie Kerr Prize.